

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

BY H. W. THOMAS.

HISTORY and science have to deal with what has been, and is. Accepting the existential, philosophy and science essay the larger task of analysis and classification; of finding the nature and order of things; their places and relations, meanings, uses, and values.

The magnitude of such a task is immeasurable. Not strange that it has filled all the long past; nor strange that it has grown larger with each age, and never seemed so almost bewilderingly great as in these wonderful years of the present.

This does not mean that little if any progress has been made; the gains have been very great; but at each forward step the vision has expanded, the fields have grown larger, and are now seen as reaching on and out into the illimitable.

Such is man amidst his mighty surroundings. Man as a self-conscious being with improvable powers, conditioned in and related to the eternal order of the rational and the good. And what we call world-progress is the growth or progressive becoming of man in his power to know, to do, and to be.

In this slow process, the errors, mistakes, and prejudices have been many, and had to be eliminated; but beyond these has always been the reality of the real. The errors, mistakes of mankind have been about something, not about nothing. Beyond astrology were the stars; back of alchemy were the elements and forces of nature. Traditions, legends, and myths have a meaning; they did not rise up out of nothing. Cosmology and ontology are greater than mythology; the real transcends the imaginary; the laws of gravity and motion are greater than the mighty animals that stood beneath the earth.

Reason has come along and corrected the errors of the senses, and in this has immensely enlarged the vision of the soul. Science

has revealed the reign of law and the order of the heavens. The higher natural has taken the place of the old law-violating miraculous.

In all this, it would not be possible to write a history or a philosophy of our world and leave out the religious; and for the reason that religion has filled so large a place in the thinking and doing of mankind. In all lands and ages along with homes and industries, schools of learning and art and the temples of justice, are the temples of worship. Governments and religions, histories, literatures, and Bibles have moved along together; and philosophy has found the paths of thought leading on and up to the great questions of the soul and God. It is not possible to have a great literature or philosophy wholly apart from the thoughts and emotions of religion.

In the farther East, the Brahman, the Buddhist, and the Confucian religions were powerful factors in the civilisations of those lands. In the middle East, Judaism rose up and stood alone in its sublime conceptions of one God, of a religion of righteousness, and the brotherhood of man. Not perfect were these conceptions at first; but the germs were there, and the great prophets went forward and ethicised—put moral qualities into the very heart of the monotheistic idea. God was called the “Holy One of Israel”; “Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.”

These were the central ideas of Judaism; hence its power to make men holy; and in this is the explanation of the persistent life and power of this most wonderful of all the peoples of the world. And it was most natural that from such a race and religion the Christ should be born. And natural too, that Christianity should fill so large a place in the history of the later civilisations of Europe and America.

If what has been, had not been, we do not know what might have been; but we do know that Christianity has moved along as a mighty power in the affairs of our world. Romanism and the Holy Roman Empire; the long wars of the Crusades; the revival of learning, the Reformation of the sixteenth century; the growth of liberty and the rise of constitutional monarchies and republics, are epochs, events, and phases of our so-called Christian civilisation.

That Judaism was not perfect; and that in many things Christianity has been not only very imperfect, but in spirit and deed very unchristian, are not—cannot be denied. But the facts also remain, that these two forms of religion have lived and wrought

mightily through the long centuries of ancient and modern history. They have appealed to the deepest centres of thought and feeling ; to the spirit-side of man and the universe.

Religion is not an anachronism ; is not a survival of the slave-ries and superstitious fears of a dark past ; though it has been affected by them, and has not yet come into the full freedom and power of the divine truth and life. The foundations of religion are in the nature and needs of man and the answerings of his vast environments. In the last analysis it is the Soul and God ; the life of God in the soul of man.

It is only in very recent years that the study of comparative religions has come into the foreground of thought ; and the study of religion in the light of the universal has hardly yet found a place in the public mind. Ignorance and prejudice have held the field, have blinded and blocked the paths of progress. Great nations and peoples have been looked upon as pagans, and their religion denounced as little if any better than "devil-worship."

And not only this ; Judaism and Christianity have stood apart as strangers, and often been arrayed one against the other as enemies. History has no sadder pages than the persecution of the Jews by Christians ; and even to-day, outside of England and America, this ancient noble people must suffer the insults of race and religious prejudices and in many places are denied the common rights of citizenship. And this in spite of the fact that in all countries the Jews are generally among the most industrious, intelligent, economic, and law-abiding of all the people.

A most opportune, needed, and helpful work has just appeared from the pen of Harris Weinstock, entitled *Jesus the Jew*.¹

The wonder is that this book, or something like it, was so slow and late in coming ; that some one had not taken up the subject before. The explanation is that the time had not fully come. Many must "run to and fro and knowledge be increased" to prepare the way ; the old ignorance and prejudices must be at least partially overcome by the growth of a larger intelligence and a more generous catholicity.

All thoughtful minds will rejoice that the better day has dawned ; that the great subject of religion is finding its place and interpretation in the light of the universal. It means the beginning at least in our day of the end of doubt and negation ; of the too common negative attitude of indifference or denial of the Divine

¹ *Jesus the Jew, and Other Addresses*. By Harris Weinstock. Funk & Wagnalls Company. New York and London. Price, \$1.

in the life of man. It means that henceforth religion will be looked upon, not from the narrow standpoint of names and isms and sectarian dogmas, but from the larger vision and thought of the real; of the soul and God; of brotherhood and righteousness.

And it means, thank God, that these two great religions, Judaism and Christianity—mother and daughter—shall be seen as one in spirit, and in the great law and life of love shall dwell together as one family, as brothers and sisters in the one Father's home for all the children of earth.

Our author emphasises the fact that Jesus was a Jew; that he observed the ceremonial forms of worship, and taught the great spiritual truths of One God, of righteousness and brotherhood, holiness of heart and life, and that he lived and died in the Jewish Church.

The place and value of Paul are also fully recognised; his vision of the spiritual as the essential, and the emancipation of religion from the burdens of the ceremonial, and in this way making it universal. But for this larger interpretation and the inspirations of a new life, Christianity, or Christianised Judaism, could not have gone forth as a vast and world-conquering power; and in this sense Paul gave shaping and potency, and by removing the narrowing limitations universalised religion.

And, it may be said, but for the accretions of the Latin theology that made the larger acceptance of Christianity impossible to Judaism, there would have been no ground for the wide separation between the two. But with these accretions, and the union of Church and State, the fall of the Empire and the decline of learning, came the dark night of ignorance, superstition, and persecution.

When the scattered Jews were banished from their homes, their property confiscated, every civil right denied and the most dreadful cruelties inflicted in the name of Christianity, it was only natural that they should hate the very name Christianity. And coming ages will more and more admire the unconquerable courage and fidelity of this suffering people, and gladly confess their great service to humanity in standing for the religion of monotheism and righteousness.

The accretions of the old Latin orthodoxy are dropping out of present beliefs. This is no longer a *lost* world to be redeemed in some substitutional way; but an imperfect world in the process of higher becoming. Man is at centre, Divine; is to be filled with God, as God was in the Christ. Our age is returning to the earlier

Greek interpretation; and there is the glad coincidence that the Jews are coming to see Christianity in this its real meaning; and that progressive Judaism and the new theology are finding they are substantially at one on this common ground, and hence are joyfully worshipping together as occasion may offer.

This does not mean that Judaism will cease to have its temples and special forms of worship, nor that Christianity will be Judaised. It means that they will be more and more one in the great law and life of love and in the larger faith and fact of the life of God in the soul of man as the one and only real religion.

It is of interest to note that the author is a layman, a business man, and not a Rabbi. It means that the people are beginning to think for themselves, and that the preachers must go forward with the growth of truth, or be left behind. Mr. Weinstock discusses the questions of present practical interest, such as: "What is the modern Jewish idea of Jesus? Do the Jews look forward to the coming of a Messiah? Do they continue to look upon themselves as God's chosen people? Does the modern Jew approve of inter-marriage?" He makes no pretention to great learning, but it is apparent that he is easily at home in the wide field over which he travels. His vision is large and clear and his spirit most reverent and beautiful.

I most earnestly wish that this timely and helpful book could be read by every Jewish Rabbi and Christian preacher in this land, and by the people in all the Churches. It would be a help to the religious life of all; there would be less prejudice and vastly more love.